not been common."

fact, last February."

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Judge gives Ray permit to testify for House panel

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A U.S. District Court judge signed papers Wednesday to permit James Earl Ray to be brought to Washington to give public testimony before the House Assassinations Committee.

The committee previously had set Aug. 16 as the date for testimony from Ray, now serving a 99-year prison sentence for murdering the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

Attorneys for the House committee had asked for a writ of habeas corpus so Ray could be turned over to U.S. marshals and be brought here. Judge William B. Bryant signed the writ after hearing 20 minutes of arguments from the committee attorney and Mark Lane, the attorney representing Ray.

Lane argued that the court did not have jurisdiction in the case and even if it did, the petition was not in accordance with the law.

Lane said Ray has testified in secret session before committee investigators who went to the Brushy Mountain Prison in Tennessee.

"He wants to come to Washington," Lane said. "He wants to testify publicly before the select committee." But, Lane said, he is concerned for the safety of Ray, being brought here by U.S. marshals.

Lane said the federal district court in Tennessee has jurisdiction in Ray's case. He also said that if a writ is granted, the custodian of the prison should be the one to bring Ray here.

G. Robert Blakey, attorney for the House committee, argued that the district court here did have jurisdiction and the petition for a writ of habeas corpus was made according to law.

Bryant said he presumed a lot of people in custody have been summoned to testify before congressional committees and asked if anybody had raised questions about the previous cases. Blakey replied, "Not to our knowledge," and said that the "undisturbed practice has been to issue the writs."